

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

SIAM.—The following communication from Mr. Abeel was written about four months ago, and after his second visit to Bangkok. There is much cause for devout gratitude to God, that the incipient efforts to extend a knowledge of the gospel to the inhabitants of Siam have been in any degree successful. We have watched the progress of that mission with deep solicitude; and our surprise is, that among such a people as the Siamese, there has been so little opposition. The success thus far has fully equalled our expectations. Not five years have elapsed since Messrs. Tomlin and Gutzlaff first reached Bangkok, and were allowed to begin their work. The desire for books has been very great, and has prevailed not only among the Siamese and the Chinese, but among those of other languages also. At times during the progress of their work, they have had equal access to the palace and to the cottage; and have had crowds of visitors, who came for medicines and for books,—“high and low,” says Mr. Abeel, “priest and people, men and women, old and young, natives and foreigners, have thronged our cottage and urged their suit with an eloquence which could scarcely be resist-

ed.” Two of the young princes, and several other persons of distinction, he mentions also, were among their occasional visitors. Such was the state of the mission fifteen months ago; and such it has been described in the preceding pages of this work. But on his *second* visit, which was made during the last summer, he found the aspect of the mission in some degree changed. Referring to this change, Mr. Abeel takes occasion to remark on the *caution* which ought to be used in making reports of the progress of christianity. He says:—

In looking over the pages of the “Repository,” I find much written about Siam, and at the same time the expression of a hope, that the subject may be continued by myself and others. I should be happy, if the state of the infant mission in Siam would allow me to answer, in faithful representation of fact, your most glowing expectations, and even lead to hopes which no past occurrence could justify.—I refer to the hope of a speedy and universal triumph of the gospel over all the forms and follies of their idolatry. But while we know that this event is determined, let us be cautious not to antedate it,—lest the prayers of

christians be restrained, and their energies paralyzed,—lest the taunts of the sceptic become *rational*, and the faith of “the faithful” in our mutual reports be shaken,—lest the great adversary gain an important advantage, and the last (present) state of Siam be worse than the first. Caution would be the less necessary, if the object was merely to square opinions with the cavils of those who would fain credit nothing, which is written about the progress of truth in the present day. This would indeed be a vain attempt. Such minds bear the stamp of derangement, at least of monomania, and no argument can be expected to have effect upon the point of their phrenzy, until the balance of reason is restored. Still caution is necessary; for without it, we injure the cause which we espouse and which we labor to advance.

When the first missionaries visited Siam, many expressions of kindness were shown to them by almost all classes of the community: and had they been permitted to remain, the interest of the nation might have survived the novelty which probably gave it birth, and grown with the growing friendship of the parties. Changes however have taken place, and so many and rapid have they been within this short period, that no one has remained to improve his acquaintance, and divert the interest of it from the missionaries to their work—from the disciple of Jesus to the Savior himself. Though this has been repeatedly attempted, and has not been attempted in vain; yet there has not been opportunity,

either to continue the instructions which have been commenced, or even to see the results of what has been taught.

The character of the Siamese, high and low, is well drawn in Gutzlaff’s journal. Fickleness, insincerity, a determined selfishness, combined with a total ignorance of the most corrective truths and principles, enter into the composition of the people at large. True, the gospel can, and it is a subject of joyful gratitude, the gospel shall transform this very character into a moral symmetry the most lovely; but until this change is witnessed, we can lay but little stress upon the simple professions of those who never sacrifice nor venture any thing for the object of their affections. Whether we are to be tolerated and allowed to proceed in the important work for which alone we visited this country, remains to be tested. As is stated in the journal referred to, every thing is incipient. “The weapons of our warfare” have not even been prepared. “The sword of the Spirit” has not been unsheathed, for “the word of God” is not yet *printed* in their language. It is true that some of the people have been partially taught orally, and by means of the tract distributed last year; but it cannot be said that their strong holds have been fairly assailed. If the stupendous fabric of idolatry in Siam—broad as the whole land, and high as the towering pride of the monarch and his “mighty men”—should fall or even totter, upon the application of a feeble power, it would stand alone in the

history of events through all the ages of the past.

Idolatry has almost every thing to support it in Siam. Their pagodas are the only schools of learning for the males, and he who refuses to become a priest, must remain "ignorant." The king has ever been one of the strictest devotees of Buddhism. The prince "whose right it is to reign" is a talapoin. The one who bids fair for the throne, and has ever been the most intimate friend of Europeans, is a great admirer of his brother's sanctity, and consequently of the religion that sanctifies him. Almost all classes, when rice is dear, have the liberty to assume the yellow robe, and take up their quarters in a pagoda. I mention these things, not to discourage the minds of any who may engage in the work, but to prepare them for its better accomplishment. That there will be opposition, there is no question—to what extent we can only conjecture—with what success we all know. It is not the character of a soldier fighting for earthly glory, to shrink back, because he is likely to be opposed: opposition generally proves his stimulus, and instead of mastering, only matures his courage. These difficulties then should be known and calculated upon, since they cannot quench the zeal nor in the least repress the ardor of the true follower of Jesus. If such should be the consequences to any, it is still necessary that the "full cost be counted" by all. It will prove a test of the fitness of the instrument for his work; it will tend to chasten his pride, sin-

plify his motives, teach him his own weakness, and direct his soul in humble importunate prayer (his most powerful weapon) to Him who is able and has determined to convert the heathen.

Upon my arrival in the country, the captain of the junk—of an officious, or perhaps more strictly a fearful spirit,—informed the king that I had returned with a good supply of books; (the books were Chinese, whether this was mentioned to the king or not, I cannot say,) upon which his majesty saw fit to issue a royal veto against their distribution: the king said, if our object was to change religions, we were welcome to attempt it in other countries, but not in his. Whether there had been a previous concert between the priests and his majesty, or whether it was a mere momentary whim or fear of the latter, I cannot determine. Other circumstances led me to conjecture that the former was the case; that the priests had become somewhat alarmed at the distribution of the tract, and the natural tendency of its contents, and availed themselves of their interest with the king to retain their official advantages, by preventing the diffusion of anti-pagan doctrines.

My particular object in hastening from Singapore before my health was established, was to supply the Chinese junks trading to Siam, with christian books; and through the kind interposition of the Lord, it was conceded by the king's officers, that that business did not come within the royal interdict. That I would limit myself to this task,

I neither promised nor intended; so that when the junks were supplied to the number of fifty, the king, I hope, really—and I practically—forgot the prohibition. As the conversion of China is of all others the most important in the list of missionary objects, it may not be improper to repeat, what has been frequently mentioned, that no foreign country presents so many advantages for this undertaking as Siam. During the present year, about 80 junks visited the place; 30 had sailed before we arrived; among the remaining 50, the books were generally well received, and there is every reason to believe were carried to China.

As you perceive from previous journals, the medical dispensary

attracts numbers from different quarters. It is peculiarly adapted to Siam, both in charity to their dying bodies, and as one of the best means, I mean remotely, of saving their souls.

The circumstance which I regarded as most favorable, during my last visit, was the increasing numbers upon our Sabbath exercises. It seldom exceeded twenty; but this was many more than ever attended before;—and I believe by the exercise of a little wisdom, the number might be almost indefinitely increased.—Of these a few, *very few*, manifested a considerable change in their character—having renounced their idols, and evinced considerable eagerness and self-denial in their search after the truth.

LITERARY NOTICES.

THE HOLY BIBLE IN CHINESE. A second edition of the Bible has recently been published at the Anglochinese college, Malacca; it is a large and beautiful octavo in 21 volumes, and has been printed with new blocks. Had the college been the means of accomplishing nothing more than the publication of this and a former edition of the Bible, we should think its founder and contributors abundantly repaid for all their labors. But we know from good authority, that many of the students, who have been educated in the col-

lege, are now filling respectable stations, civil or commercial, in the Straits; and that some of them are teaching the English language in Pegu and Cochin-China. And above all, we rejoice to know that some have there received the gospel in the love of it; obey its precepts; enjoy its consolations; and assist, even in China itself, in diffusing a knowledge of its righteous requisitions and its glorious promises.

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